

163 For the years 1936-39, inclusive, there were 690 registered births in Cherán. The sex ratio was very nearly 1:1, with 347 male births and 343 female births. The distribution is shown in table 11. It is of interest that great excess of female births occurred in 1936, reaching a peak in June of that year, while a considerable excess of male births occurred in 1939, also reaching a peak in June.

TABLE 12.—Marriages in Cherán, 1937-39¹

Age of married person	Married men		Married women	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
13.....			3	2.0
14.....	1	0.7	23	15.4
15.....	2	1.3	49	32.9
16.....	12	8.1	36	17.4
17.....	8	5.4	9	6.0
18.....	32	21.5	6	4.0
19.....	12	8.1	2	1.3
20.....	16	10.1	3	2.0
21.....	5	3.4		
22.....	10	6.7		
23.....	5	3.4	2	1.3
24.....			2	1.3
25.....	9	6.0	5	3.4
26.....	5	3.4	1	.7
27.....	1	.7		
28.....	5	3.4	2	2.0
29.....	3	2.0	2	1.3
30.....	1	.7		
31.....	2	1.3		
32.....	4	2.7	2	1.3
33.....	2	1.3	1	.7
34.....	1	.7		
35.....			1	.7
36.....	4	2.7	2	1.3
37.....	3	2.0	3	2.0
38.....	1	.7		
39.....			1	.7
40.....	1	.7		
41.....	1	.7		
42.....	1	.7		
43.....	1	.7		
44.....	1	.7		
45.....	1	.7		
46.....	1	.7		
47.....	1	.7		
48.....	1	.7		
49.....	1	.7		
50.....	1	.7		
51.....	1	.7		
52.....	1	.7		
53.....	1	.7		
54.....	1	.7		
55.....	1	.7		
56.....	1	.7		
57.....	1	.7		
58.....	1	.7		
59.....	1	.7		
60.....	1	.7		
61.....	1	.7		
62.....	1	.7		
63.....	1	.7		
Total.....	149	100.0	149	100.0

¹ Data prepared by Dr. Emmanuel Palacios, Departamento Autónomo de Asuntos Indígenas, México.

Data on the 149 marriages for 1937, 1938, and 1939 are shown in table 12. The age data are subject to the same probable inaccuracy in age estimates as is the case with the data on adult men. However, inasmuch as many Cherán residents are today sensitive about the early age of marriages and it is known that the ages given for young persons about to be married are often exaggerated, the data underscore the early age of marriage. In round numbers, 2 percent of girls married were only 13, 15 percent were 14, 32 percent were 15, 17 percent were 16, and 6 percent were 17. Only 2 percent of girls married were aged 20. It is significant that no marriages were recorded for girls aged 21 or 22. In all probability all, or nearly all, marriages recorded after this age were remarriages.

582 The earliest age recorded for married males
 585 is 14, this age group comprising 0.7 percent of
 the total male marriages. However, there is
 reason to believe that the age of males is falsi-
 fied at marriage more than that of females.
 Most marriages, according to the statistics, take
 place at 16 or after; 8 percent of males marry
 at the age of 16. Five percent were married
 at 17, 21 percent at 18, 8 percent at 19,
 and 10 percent at 20. None were married at
 age 24, but 6 percent were married at 25.
 Some marriages listed at this age are probably
 remarriages, and certainly few first marriages
 take place after 25. The emphasis placed upon
 marriage as a normal state is indicated by the
 considerable age of some persons married.
 Two women and two men are shown as married
 at 60, while one man is shown as married at
 80 and another at 82.

No particular season of marriage preference
 is evident if marriage frequencies are analyzed
 by months, despite assertions that most mar-
 riages take place in the winter after harvest.
 Evidently marriages take place when people
 have resources, regardless of the time of year.
 The fluctuations from year to year probably
 could be accounted for in terms of variable
 economic conditions. It must be remembered
 that the month of marriage reported is the time
 of the civil registry and church wedding.
 Probably the majority of marriages are con-
 summated before these events.

In addition to the statistical data, even earlier
 marriages are believed to take place. One girl,
 whose age was alleged by several people inde-
 pendently to be only 15, had four children.
 Gossip told of another case of a girl of 10 years
 who was "half married," that is, the groom's
 parents did not yet permit him to sleep with
 his wife. But at the age of 14 the girl was
 said to have had two children. Before the
 Tarascans are censured for the practice of such
 early marriages, it should be born in mind that
 Bishop Quiroga, who had so much influence on
 the Tarascans, in his ordinances authorized the
 marriage of boys over 14 and girls over 12
 (Arriaga, 1938).

163 Data on family composition and fertility
 842 were obtained by interviews with 53 families
 where the wife was 47 years of age or older
 and had not borne children recently (table 13).

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882 from their parents. In an overheard conversation, two young men commented at length on how fast people got old at their ages, while people over 30 did not seem to age at all.

The transition for girls is even less clearly defined than that for boys. As girls are sometimes married even before their first menstruation, this physiological transition hardly seems to mark a status change. From the age of 6 or 8, girls essentially perform adult labors in assisting their mothers. Youth is essentially a transition to adulthood and marriage. As a general thing, girls are married soon after the first menstruation.

881 Informants were agreed that most girls experience the first menses at about 14 years of age; whether this is the ideal age or the actual age could not be determined. No cases of failure to menstruate were known. Menstrual disorders apparently do occur sometimes and the aid of midwives is sought in such cases, but no details could be secured. Men, at least, believe that girls are generally ignorant of the menstrual period until they experience the first occurrence, and this belief coincides with a few statements by women. Some girls are said to be a little depressed or frightened, but the experience is not severe. Mothers explain to their daughters that the phenomenon is perfectly natural, and girls never become ill.

882 The mother always informs her husband when the first menstruation occurs. At this time the father increases his admonitions to his wife to watch over the girl. Careful mothers from now on do not let the girls go alone for water or to church or walk about the streets. Care is taken that girls do not see "bad" things. Well-brought-up girls, in fact, are hardly allowed out of the house until they are married, but if this ideal were really lived up to, it is difficult to see how either marriages could be arranged or "stealing" occur. Cherán, though, feels its standards are much above those of other towns and people mention some of La Cañada towns, especially Tacura, as being very bad. The latter town is said even to have many cases of sexual relations between father and daughter, which is said never to happen in Cherán.

841 Most women early become regular in their menstrual periods. No devices for keeping

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583 after the Rosary and when she is usually accompanied only by female relatives. The relatives scream and create a disturbance. The male relatives are summoned at once, either by the female relatives or by any bystander who may be interested enough to do so. The male relatives go in pursuit of the girl and the groom's friends interfere with the chase although they must not use force. They try to block the streets, and sometimes push or trip the male relatives, but they do not hold on to them or strike any blows. If the male relatives of the girl catch the groom before he has gotten the girl to the house of one of his relatives, he must not resist, even though the girl's relatives may abuse him or beat him.

584 Opportunities for courting and for making arrangements are few. The boy may visit the girl's house only on rare occasions, such as the *melebris* before Christmas, although he may occasionally have accompanied his parents on a visit. He also may speak to the girl at the door of her courtyard or exchange a word or two when she is on the streets with her mother carrying water. The best opportunities are the rare occasions when the girl may be allowed on the streets alone in the daytime to visit a relative or to run an errand nearby and especially when she has been allowed to go somewhere with other girls. Sunday afternoon is the main time for courting. A boy uses a special whistle to attract the attention of a girl. If she is with other girls, all stop, and the boy uses signs to indicate which one he wishes to talk to. The other girls go on slowly and the indicated one, if she is interested, lingers behind for a few minutes' conversation.

[198] 581 The standards for choice of spouse by a boy are several. A boy wants an attractive-looking girl who is fairly tall and of medium build and who also is industrious and of good family. This means her family is not completely poverty-stricken, her father not a drunkard, and her mother not "perverse" (apparently meaning "immoral"). Also, the girl should be 582 either the same age or a year or two younger than the boy. In a few instances the girl is a 587 year or two older. No cases were reported of widows marrying younger men, but sometimes a widower marries a younger woman. One case cited is a man of over 65 who has a wife

582 aged 20. The instance is regarded as excep-
 587 tional and as undesirable. As a rule, the boy
 584 discusses his choice with his parents or with
 604 one of his uncles. Although no specific data
 could be secured on the subject, from the facts
 that boys at this age seem to be shy with their
 parents and that the bride is usually taken to
 the house of an uncle, it seems likely that uncles
 are consulted on matters of marriage more
 commonly than are the parents. Some stated
 there is no preference for maternal or paternal
 uncles in this connection; others said the girl is
 taken to a paternal uncle or, lacking an uncle,
 a paternal aunt.

583 After a girl is stolen, only on rare occasions
 522 does the marriage not follow. Her parents,
 however much opposed they may be, must
 always give their consent, for it is very difficult
 for girls to get married if they have been stolen
 and then returned home. As Agustín put it,
 "they have to wait for a sucker" in order to
 get married. A youth marrying such a girl
 is the butt of teasing by all his age mates, even
 by persons who do not even know his name.
 In the one case known of a young man who
 married a girl who had previously been stolen
 by someone else, the youth is subjected to so
 much teasing that he is virtually a recluse,
 either staying in his house when home or work-
 ing by himself in the woods.

583 It is generally felt that the municipal authori-
 ties should force a youth to marry a girl after
 he has stolen her. If they do not, the authori-
 [667] ties are always suspected of receiving bribes to
 overlook the case. Informants best acquainted
 with customary viewpoints, though, stated that
 the municipal authorities are not required to
 act unless the parents of the groom make the
 first formal visit to the girl's parents. In this
 case the municipal authorities are expected to
 force completion of the marriage. In actual
 fact the municipal authorities bring some pres-
 sure to bear on youths if the girl's parents
 lodge a complaint.

The following accounts of stealing girls give
 additional light on the procedures. The first
 account was written by Agustín Rangel.

When I first met the groom it was about 2 p. m. (on
 a Sunday) at the corner of Damas Gambe's store. We
 walked around for a while and when we were coming
 down the highway he told me he was going to steal a

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mercial transactions and specialized production for sale outside the region), whereas the women, mostly sequestered in their homes, remain conservative, and consequently more "Indian-like." The responses may, however, represent a real sex differential, i.e., more women than men native to the community — with men from elsewhere marrying into the community. In 201 matings where data on the birthplace of both spouses were available, both were from Paracho in 72.6 per cent of cases, 10 per cent of the husbands were from elsewhere, 8.5 per cent of the wives were from other communities, and in 9 per cent of cases both were born elsewhere. Slightly more men than women, therefore, do marry into the community, but this difference is not large enough to explain the sex difference in ethnic attribution.

TABLE 1

"RACE" OF FATHER AND "RACE" OF MOTHER

Mothers reported as	Fathers reported as		Total
	Indian	Mestizo	
Indian.....	130	33	163
Mestiza.....	16	61	77
Total.....	146	94	240*

 χ^2 with one degree of freedom: 300.28 $P < 0.0001$

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Whereas sex of the parents does influence the responses, sex of the respondents seems to have virtually no effect. Females reported 66.9 per cent of 139 parents to be Indian, whereas males reported 63.5 per cent of 386 parents to be Indian. The difference is not statistically significant.

When the data taken from the record sheets are compiled in terms of the age of the respondent (see Table 2) another tendency may be noted. Both relatively and absolutely more Indian parents are reported by older respondents. Those 40 years old or less reported 48 per cent of fathers and 54 per cent of mothers to be Indian, in contrast to 73 per cent and 76 per cent respectively by individuals who were 41 years old or over. Conversely, of course, the percentage of Mestizo parents is approximately the same as that of Indian parents through the 40 year age group, but thereafter the proportions change markedly and membership in the Mestizo group is claimed for far fewer parents.

These age trends may be interpreted in several ways. First, the younger informants, in ascribing to their parents membership in one or the other ethnic group, may reflect an awareness that their current way of life is less Indian than it is Mestizo, and may extend this to their parents. With more education and a wider outlook one would expect to find among youth a greater bias toward being counted as belonging to a larger ethnic entity than that of the region, and to the ethnic group with a somewhat higher education — the Mestizo in both instances. On the other hand, the marked

* Some variation in total number from table to table results from the fact that not all respondents gave information on all points. Furthermore, where data on parents rather than on respondents are tabulated information from only one sibling interviewed is included.